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ABSTRACT

Described as one of 34 booklets in a series of promising programs on childhood education, the report provides information on the Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy (California). Aspects of the program designed for the educationally disadvantaged are discussed including its origin, nature of the population, parental involvement, objectives and structure, facilities and staff, financial concerns, and specific materials and approaches. Sources of additional information on the school are also provided. (RD)

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Model Programs

Childhood Education

Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy

North Hollywood, California

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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Model Programs

Childhood Education

Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy

North Hollywood, California

A center for work with educationally handicapped children

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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FOREWORD

This booklet is one of 34 in a series of promising programs on childhood education prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. The series was written under contract by the American Institutes for Research for the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Office of Child Development and the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Within the broad area of childhood education the series includes descriptions of programs on reading and language development, the disadvantaged, preschool education, and special education. In describing a program, each booklet provides details about the purpose; the children reached; specific materials, facilities, and staff involved; and other special features such as community services, parental involvement, and finances. Sources of further information on the programs are also provided.

The student body of Dubnoff School, North Hollywood, California, is comprised of students who cannot function in public schools. They suffer from emotional problems, perceptual problems, specific learning disabilities, minimal brain dysfunction, hyperactivity, or autism. Of these children, Dubnoff's staff members say, "We can no longer put these youngsters away. There are no more excuses now. We know how to reach these children. They are not impossible to teach . . . only hard to teach."

About 150 educationally disadvantaged children are taught at Dubnoff School each year; over 60 percent are able to go on to public school and to lead useful lives. This is not accomplished through classical therapy. Mrs. Belle Dubnoff, co-founder and director of the school, states, "We believe that education is a primary therapeutic tool." By providing a special educational program and a warm, secure environment, the school helps children others have said cannot be helped.

A NEW SCHOOL BEGINS

Dubnoff School was founded in 1948 by Mrs. Dubnoff and Dr. Marianne Frostig. Originally there were only three students in this "school"--a bedroom in Mrs. Dubnoff's house. In 1953 Dr. Frostig ended her association with the school to pursue other

educational interests, and classes were moved to a small building constructed especially for the school. In 1960 the school became nonprofit and nonsectarian, and classes were held in a local church. In 1968 the school moved to its present facilities, which were designed to meet the school's needs. Dubnoff School is licensed by the State Department of Mental Hygiene.

Throughout the school's history Mrs. Dubnoff has served as director, and its main purpose has been to offer a therapeutic education to children with severe problems. The school has grown to an enrollment of approximately 150, and the program has become more diversified. An increased emphasis has been placed upon helping children under 5 years, reaching them before their problems are compounded by years of frustration, insecurity, and failure.

A SCHOOL AND A NURSERY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL PROBLEMS

Dubnoff School includes a compensatory nursery and a regular day school, and it is in session all year except for 2 weeks at the end of the spring semester and 2 weeks at the end of the summer. The children in the preschool program are from 3 to 5 years old; those in the regular school are from 5 to 12. The students' backgrounds vary in regard to socioeconomic level and race, but

all students have special problems. Some have behavior disorders such as phobias or withdrawal; others are diagnosed as mentally retarded, autistic, psychotic, or symbiotic. They lack a sense of identity and are insecure. Almost all find it difficult, if not impossible, to communicate and interact with others. The school's program is designed to help the children overcome these problems.

The 30 nursery school students are doubly handicapped: they not only have emotional disabilities but are from poverty areas as well. The average income of their families is $4,000 a year. The older students, those from 5 to 12 who are in the regular school program, come from different socioeconomic groups: 20 percent from upper class, 60 percent middle class, and 20 percent welfare level. While the majority of these students are not as poor as the younger ones, their problems are more severe. They did not receive help until they were school age; thus their problems are more ingrained.

Admittance to the school is determined after a thorough psychological and medical evaluation of the child. The school excludes physically handicapped children such as the blind or deaf because there are other schools to serve their needs. It also accepts

only those it seems possible to help. The ratio of boys to girls in the school tends to be about 5 to 3. This is not necessarily because boys have more problems, staff members say, but because girls tend to be quieter so their emotional disturbances are not as noticeable to parents, and they are not as likely to be referred to the school.

DEVELOPING IDENTITY IN A STRUCTURED ENVIRONMENT

How is the school able to help these children? At the heart of the program is a great deal of order and structure. Mrs. Dubnoff says, "For the first time in their lives, these children know they can depend on people and things. They know that they will go to school every morning, that the same teacher will be there, and that whatever they were working on yesterday they can finish today. Permanence, something constant, is what gives them a sense of security." Certain routines are followed every day, and the children are carefully prepared for new activities. The children are given more freedom when they can handle it.

The school also helps these children to achieve a sense of identity. Upon entering the school, many of the students do not know their names; they have no real idea of "me." Staff members make countless efforts to help each child discover who he is. For

example, each child is called by name, both in conversation and in numerous "name" games. His name and picture are placed beside his "cubby." There are mirrors in the room and an abundance of clothes to dress up in. Because most of the children need perceptual-motor training, they are taught muscle coordination and how to use their bodies as a part of the program. As the children's motor skills improve, their self-images also improve.

More than 90 percent of the children have speech difficulties--poor articulation, stuttering, or even mutism--and special emphasis is placed on verbal communication. Linguistic and auditory skills are developed through a special language-development curriculum.

Even the most basic things must be taught to Dubnoff School children; for example, many new students do not know how to play, to eat together, or to ask for things. Staff members cannot assume that the children know any particular things, and they must offer the students a great deal of repetition, reinforcement, and patience. On the other hand, the children are expected to do certain things. Mrs. Dubnoff points out, "It is crucial for teachers and parents to know where to place expectation levels." She explains that, if the expectation levels are placed too high,

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the child will be continually frustrated. If they are too low, the child won't perform to his ability. Staff members seek to motivate their students by insuring success in small increments and by placing expectation levels appropriately.

The school offers a stimulating environment that is characterized by warmth, understanding, and attention for each child. Staff members consider it essential to maintain a low ratio of children to adults so that help for each child can be maximized. The average ratio in the school is one adult for every three children. The adults include credentialed teachers, trained assistants, and supervised volunteer aides. Because many of the children have had little contact with men, the school has actively recruited men for the staff, and at present almost half of the staff members are male.

MATERIALS TO HELP THE EDUCATIONALLY HANDICAPPED

A variety of materials is used in the school. In the elementary school wide use is made of a series of materials called the Dubnoff School Program, developed by Mrs. Dubnoff and two staff members. These materials are now published commercially by Teaching Resources, the educational service of the *New York Times*. Dubnoff School Program materials are a series of exercises, that

include perceptual-motor exercises, to help the child learn to read and write. They are sequential, developmental, and reinforcing and can be done by an individual child or an entire class. For example, on one worksheet the child traces the wheels of a car, first using an acetate overlay, then marking directly on the paper. Then he cuts, matches, and pastes shapes to worksheet illustrations. The activity may be carried further to include clay modeling and finger painting to reinforce fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Dubnoff School Program materials also include wooden pattern boards with brass pegs. Cards indicate the pattern the child is to reproduce by placing rubber bands of various colors on the pegs. The patterns become more difficult as the child progresses through the stack of cards.

In addition to these, other published items and teacher-devised materials are utilized. While the materials are not revolutionary, they provide a curriculum structure that is carefully sequenced and requires practice and overpractice. The teaching techniques and curriculum are established to meet each child's needs so that the direction of the child's behavior comes from him, not from imposed conditions. Teachers are encouraged to use their own methods, and they share ideas and techniques in inservice training sessions and informal meetings.

FACILITIES TO CREATE A WARM ENVIRONMENT

The facilities of Dubnoff School play an important part in creating a healthy and stimulating environment for the children. The main building is a two-story structure with staff offices on the second floor. On the first floor are classrooms, intentionally small for the small classes they accommodate. A separate building is divided into two rooms: one a gymnasium, the other a combination auditorium-music room. Bright colors are used both inside and outside the buildings. A large playground covers the area behind the school and includes playground sculpture as well as more traditional equipment. Also part of this area is a swimming pool where all of the elementary school children take swimming lessons. Staff members feel that the pool is especially important because swimming not only teaches the children motor skills but also gives them a great feeling of accomplishment and self-pride.

FINANCING THE PROGRAM

Dubnoff School provides a hot lunch and a snack for each student and provides bus transportation from each nursery student's home and from central points in the area for older students. These services, plus the low student-teacher ratio and other expenses, make the Dubnoff School program a costly one. The nursery school, a compensatory education program for ghetto children, is

90 percent funded by the State of California under the MacAteer Act. The Dubnoff School pays the remaining 10 percent of the expenses. The cost of the program for each regular school student is approximately $410 per month. Tuition is $300 per month, and from 35 percent to 40 percent of the children are on scholarships. Remaining funds come from contributions and the school's supporting auxiliary.

INVOLVING PARENTS

The Dubnoff School staff does not confine its work to students; it undertakes a number of programs to work with the parents of the children. Staff members describe the program: "Our goal has been to enlist the parents as our allies in the rehabilitation of their children. We help them to cope with the management of their difficult children, to reduce their guilt and anxiety, and to learn to gain some pleasure from their children."

Each parent is required to attend a discussion group held once a week for 6 weeks and conducted by the school's social worker. Child management techniques and approaches are discussed.

Individual parent conferences with teachers are held at the end of each semester so that the teacher may give the parents a

thorough review of their child's progress in the academics, perceptual and motor skills, and social-emotional development. Often the child is included in these conferences so that he too can become more aware of his strengths and weaknesses. Parent conferences with administrators are held before a child is admitted to the school and again 3 months after enrollment. Other conferences between parents and teachers or administrators are held as necessary throughout the year. In cases in which parents need outside help, referrals to public agencies are made.

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STAFF INCLUDES PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS

Staff members include the director, two assistant directors, a director of community relations whose duties include fund-raising and coordination of volunteer services, a part-time psychologist and a part-time psychiatrist. A full-time public health nurse works only with the nursery school; a full-time social worker handles referrals and applications for the regular school and acts as a liaison between parents and the school. Instructional personnel include teachers, assistants, and volunteer aides.

EVALUATIONS SHOW STUDENT PROGRESS

For the nursery school, test data for 1968-69 indicate that the average change between pre- and post-test scores on the

Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test was 6.0 per child; on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, 7.2 points per child. Teacher evaluations showed that the children made gains in the areas of language development, task orientation in a nursery setting, development of a positive self-concept, and reduction of symptoms of emotional disturbance. The children were visibly happier and had excellent attendance records.

There has been no formal evaluation of the students in the regular school program, but upon leaving, the majority of them are able to enter public school and to function well. Informal followup is done by staff members, who are convinced that the expenditure of time, effort, and money is repaid many times over in the remarkable progress of these students.

OTHER SCHOOL PROJECTS

Dubnoff School is not just a place for teaching children; several other programs are operated by the school. Among these are a pilot infant program; Project ME, a media development center; and community services, all designed to help educationally handicapped children.

The *pilot infant program* was started in 1969 and operates through grants from the Andrew Norman Foundation and the Community Mental Retardation Foundation. The need for early therapeutic experience is recognized as a preventative of later, more severe problems; this program was designed in response to that need. Infants included in the program are those considered "high risks" because they exhibit such signs as apathy, restlessness, hyperactivity, lack of eye contact, body resistance to physical contact with the mother, lack of response to stimuli, or impaired development for no apparent physical cause.

About 20 infants, from 6 to 11 months old, and their mothers have participated in this educational and therapeutic program that takes place both at the school and in their homes. The activities at the school occur mainly in the Infant Center, a separate building on the grounds, and particularly in a playroom there. The playroom adjoins an observation room with a one-way mirror and is furnished with age-appropriate toys and equipment.

Staff members study the patterns of interaction between the mother and infant in both the playroom and their home. Mothers spend some of their time in the observation room to watch the infant alone, with other babies, and with other adults. Mother and

staff members compare and discuss their observations, trying to determine how best to help the infant. Among the concepts emphasized are selective intervention, i.e., knowing both when to intervene and when not to; encouragement of anticipation, i.e., telling and showing the infant ahead of time what to expect; and promotion of mutual understanding, acceptance, and respect between mother and infant. Through her observations and discussions with staff members, the mother is able to understand her child and know what she can reasonably expect from him.

The pilot infant program has no conclusive results to date as it is too new. Staff members believe that the program is important, however, not only for the mothers and infants involved but also for the knowledge obtained by staff members from their observations.

Project ME--Media for the Exceptional--is the newest program at Dubnoff School. Started in the summer of 1969, it operates with funds from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped of the U.S. Office of Education. Project ME's aim is to produce integrated units of instruction on a multimedia, multisensory system approach that will enhance the learning program for exceptional children aged 3 to 6 years.

The most innovative material produced by Project ME thus far is the Learning Wall, a large rear-projection screen and a cabinet. In the cabinet, to the side of the screen, are all of the mechanisms for sound and projection. Through a series of mirrors the images are projected onto a screen which extends from the floor to the limit of the child's vertical reach. The important characteristic of the Learning Wall is that the child does not just sit and look at the projected images; he interacts both verbally and physically. For example, Project ME has developed a group of filmstrips called the "Let's Look For" Series. The picture may show a group of unlike objects, and the narrator says to the children watching, "Let's look for the *red* dish in this group. Who can come up to the screen and show us the *red* dish?" Filmstrip action is then stopped and a child can walk up to the wall and point to the object. The filmstrip then shows a large circle around the red dish so that the child and those watching know if his answer was correct.

In addition to the "Let's Look For" Series, Project ME has developed a similar series on body image to teach awareness of body parts and facial features. A filmstrip called "Playing A Color Cone Game" utilizes colored rings on a stick. The filmstrip tells the child what to do with the rings, giving him experience in

colors, shapes, and certain movements. Another product is a 20-minute, 16-mm. film titled "School Is for Children" which describes the Dubnoff preschool program in language young children can understand. When the public health nurse visits children's homes prior to their enrollment at Dubnoff School, she shows this film to the child and his parents for orientation to the school's activities.

The Project ME staff is planning a number of projects for the future: at least two alternate sound tracks for the "School Is for Children" film--one for parents and one in Spanish; and "fuzzy-wuzzy pictures"--out-of-focus pictures to be sharpened in steps so the children can guess what the objects are. They hope to experiment with the use of photos of the children to aid their sense of identity, perhaps using "fuzzy-wuzzy" techniques. Other Learning Wall programs are being planned, including one in which the children will use the wall as a flannelboard, placing objects on the screen to fit in with the projected image.

All of Project ME's materials are tested with the children at the school. The ME offices are adjacent to the school's playground; the Learning Wall and a media laboratory are in separate buildings accessible to the children. Project ME staff is working

to reduce the cost of its Learning Wall--materials for the laboratory version cost $500 in addition to regular classroom equipment used--to make Project ME materials practical and inexpensive as well as valuable for all handicapped children.

Activities and services in the community--In addition to its educational programs and Project ME, Dubnof School offers a number of community services. A special tutoring program for between 25 and 30 public school students is given after school hours at Dubnoff School. Some of those tutored are former Dubnoff students; all of them need help for specific learning problems.

The school is a center for research with working agreements with several local hospitals and child centers. It is also an important training facility for teachers and an observation and training center. The University of California at Los Angeles has a Student Tutorial Project which directly involves students with the school. Volunteers from the University of California (Los Angeles), San Fernando Valley State College, and local high schools work at the school, supervised both individually and as a group. The average volunteer works about 10 hours a week--5 hours on 2 days--both giving assistance and obtaining valuable experience.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

A number of materials are available about the Dubnoff School, the following mimeographed items being available from the school:

"Building Ego Factors Through the Curriculum" by Mrs. Belle Dubnoff. Presented at the Fourth International Seminar of Special Education, Cork, Ireland, September 1969.

"The Case for Early Childhood Education" by Mrs. Belle Dubnoff. Presented at a Select Congressional Sub-Committee of Labor and Education, Washington, D. C., December 3, 1969.

"Early Detection and Remediation of Learning Disabilities" by Mrs. Belle Dubnoff. Presented at the Institute on Earlier Recognition and Treatment of Handicapping Conditions in Childhood, University of California at Berkeley, May 6, 1970.

Other materials describing the school include a published booklet *What's Hard About Loving a Child?* and two 16-mm. color films, "Nobody Took the Time" and "School Is for Children." These too are available from Dubnoff School.

Additional details on the program may be obtained from:

The Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy
10526 Victory Place
North Hollywood, California 91606
(213) 877-5678 or (213) 984-3604

or

Project ME--Media for the Exceptional
6345 Clybourn Avenue
North Hollywood, California 91606
(213) 877-3077 or (213) 980-3772

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MODEL PROGRAMS--Childhood Education

This is one in a series of 34 descriptive booklets on childhood education programs prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. Following is a list of the programs and their locations:

The Day Nursery Assn. of Cleveland, Ohio
Neighborhood House Child Care Services, Seattle, Wash.
Behavior Analysis Model of a Follow Through Program, Oraibi, Ariz.
Cross-Cultural Family Center, San Francisco, Calif.
NRO Migrant Child Development Center, Pasco, Wash.
Bilingual Early Childhood Program, San Antonio, Tex.
Santa Monica Children's Centers, Calif.
Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction, Salt Lake City, Utah
Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy, North Hollywood, Calif.
Demonstration Nursery Center for Infants and Toddlers, Greensboro, N.C.
Responsive Environment Model of a Follow Through Program, Goldsboro, N.C.
Center for Early Development and Education, Little Rock, Ark.
DOVACK, Monticello, Fla.
Perceptual Development Center Program, Natchez, Miss.
Appalachia Preschool Education Program, Charleston, W. Va.
Foster Grandparent Program, Nashville, Tenn.
Hartford Early Childhood Program, Conn.
Philadelphia Teacher Center, Pa.
Cognitively Oriented Curriculum, Ypsilanti, Mich.
Mothers' Training Program, Urbana, Ill.
The Micro-Social Preschool Learning System, Vineland, N.J.
Project PLAN, Parkersburg, W. Va.
Interdependent Learner Model of a Follow Through Program, New York, N.Y.
San Jose Police Youth Protection Unit, Calif.
Model Observation Kindergarten, Amherst, Mass.
Boston Public Schools Learning Laboratories, Mass.
Martin Luther King Family Center, Chicago, Ill.
Behavior Principles Structural Model of a Follow Through Program, Dayton, Ohio
University of Hawaii Preschool Language Curriculum, Honolulu, Hawaii
Springfield Avenue Community School, Newark, N.J.
Corrective Reading Program, Wichita, Kans.
New Schools Exchange, Santa Barbara, Calif.
Tacoma Public Schools Early Childhood Program, Wash.
Community Cooperative Nursery School, Menlo Park, Calif.

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